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## Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks

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# *Can I Get Food Stamps?*

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## *A Quick Guide to Food Stamp Benefits*

- ◆ Do you meet the Limits for Food Stamps?
- ◆ How much will you get?
- ◆ What will the case worker need to know?

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# What are Food Stamps?

The Food Stamp Program is the Government's first line of defense against hunger. In Ohio, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) administers the Food Stamp Program through county offices. This program provides you with the *Ohio Direction Card* to be used in place of cash in most grocery stores to purchase healthy food for your family.

## What is this booklet for?

This booklet will walk you through the steps ODJFS takes when deciding whether or not you will receive food stamps. The case workers look at a range of things to calculate if you are eligible and how much you are eligible for. This process can be very complicated. We try in the following pages to explain how it works. We hope by understanding what ODJFS looks at it will help you decide whether you might be eligible and what materials are needed when deciding your case.

## How do I apply?

You apply at your local County Department of Job and Family Services (CDJFS). You will find the phone number in the government *blue pages* of the phone book under "Social Services Department" or "Welfare Department."

## What do I need to bring?

- ✓ **Proof of age of everyone in household** (birth certificate, driver's license, etc.)
- ✓ **Proof of citizenship or alien status** (voter registration card, naturalization certificate, INSI-94, etc.)
- ✓ **Proof of all household income** (social security benefit payments, OWF income verification, paycheck stubs, etc.)
- ✓ **Your social security card** and a social security card for each member of your household
- ✓ **Rent receipts, utility bills, home insurance, and property tax documents**
- ✓ **Proof of medical expenses**, if you are over 60 years old (actual bill(s))
- ✓ **Proof of where you live** (a piece of mail, residency statement, lease agreement). You are still eligible if you do not have an address
- ✓ **Proof of Disability Benefits** (SSDI or SSD payment stub, etc.)
- ✓ **Proof of other assets and resources** ( bank records, etc.)

Call your local County Department of Job and Family Services for a complete list of what to bring.

# Will I Get Food Stamps?

## Step 1. Personal Resources

Your household's countable assets, including checking and saving accounts, can not exceed \$2,000, or \$3,000 if you are 60 years of age or older or disabled.

*Are your personal resources below this limit?*

## Step 2. Your Total (Gross) Income

The case worker will verify your total monthly income ( everything you receive that has value: what you earn from your job, SSI, child support, etc.) meets with eligibility guidelines. Your total income is also called your gross income.

*Are you below the limit? Check Chart A below.*

### Chart A: Total (Gross) Monthly Income Limits

Size of Family Units	1	2	3	4	Each Extra Person
Maximum Income	\$973	\$1,313	\$1,654	\$1,994	+\$341

## Step 3: Allowable Expenses

Next, the case worker will look at your monthly bills. *Allowable expenses* are bills you have to pay (money from these can not go to food). CDJFS will decide how much you get in food stamps based on how much you have left after these bills. *Allowable expenses* can include:

- √ 20% of earned income;
- √ a standard deduction of \$134;
- √ medical expenses over \$35 a month for elderly or disabled members;
- √ certain dependent-care costs when needed for training, education, or work, but not more than \$200 for each child under age 2 and not more than \$175 for each other dependent;
- √ legally owed child support; and
- √ a percentage of shelter costs (rent and utilities capped at \$367).

*Allowable expenses* are the most confusing part of calculating eligibility due to caps on bill amounts counted by the government. Because *allowable expenses* are so complicated,

***make sure you have all these bills with you when applying!***

*What is the total of your allowable expenses?*

The case worker will subtract the total of allowable expenses from your total income to get your net income. Your net (or *countable*) income is the income amount the government reviews when deciding your benefits.

*Are you below the net income limits? Check Chart B below.*

## Chart B. Net Monthly Income Limits

Size of Family Units	1	2	3	4	Each Extra Person
Maximum Income	\$749	\$1,010	\$1,272	\$1,534	+\$262

## How Much Will You Get?

### Step 4: Your Household Contribution

The government designates *one third* of your net income to food. Divide your net income by 3. This amount is how much you have to spend on food (your household contribution).

*How much does the government expect you to contribute for food?*

### Step 5: How Much Will You Get Monthly?

The case worker will look at the amount your household size needs to buy food for a month according to government guidelines (the maximum allotment).

Size of Family Units	1	2	3	4	Each Extra Person
Maximum Income	\$141	\$259	\$371	\$471	+\$106

## Chart C: Maximum Allotment of Food Stamps

The amount of money you don't have for food, food stamps should make up for. Look at the difference between how much is needed to feed your household size and your household contribution. This is the amount of food stamps you should receive each month.

*How much will you get in Food Stamps?*

## Conclusion

When applying for food stamps, take all the papers, bills and identification you will need. You will receive notice of the case worker's decision within 30 days. If you don't agree with the amount or think you were wrongfully denied, you have the right to a state hearing. Even simplified, the food stamp system is complicated. Stick with it and hopefully you will get the food stamps you deserve.